



## Parashat Shemini

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In Parashat Shemini we read about the kosher and non-kosher animals. We have the fish, we have the birds, we have the animals. The Mishna tell us in Massechet Nidah that there are two kosher signs for a fish: fins and scales. But the Mishna tells us, כל שיש בו קשקשת יש לו סנפיר, if there are scales then there are fins – if there are scales, then you know the fins are there. ויש בו סנפיר ואין לו קשקשת, but there might be fins without scales. The Gemara asks, if scales always means fins, but fins doesn't always mean scales, then why isn't there just one sign for a fish because if there are scales, then you know there are also fins?!

The Gemara answers cryptically, להגדיל תורה ולהאדיר, for the greatness of Torah. What does that mean?

Some of the Baalei Musar explain, life is about fins and scales. Scales protect what I have. Scales are the armor of the fish, protection of the present. Fins help you swim. Fins help you go further. Fins help you grow. Life is not just about scales. It is about scales, but life is more about fins. We have to be “fins Jews” and not just “scales Jews.” It's not just about protecting what we have, but about gaining and growing and להגדיל תורה ולהאדיר, becoming great is to be a “fins Jew” and not just a “scales Jew.”

This is extremely important in many aspects of our lives, especially in our connection to Eretz Yisrael.

There is another amazing thought on this week's Parasha. Rav Sorotzkin points out that there is a non-kosher bird in our Parasha that is called the “Daah” and in Parashat Re'eh it is called the “Raah” (seeing). Why is it called “Raah,” שרואה ביותר (Gemara Chullin), it sees very far. It has an amazing ability to see. The Gemara continues “it can stand in Babylonia and see a ‘neveilah’ (a problematic dead animal, not kosher, not fit for eating) in Eretz Yisrael. Rabbi Sorotzkin asks, why isn't this bird kosher if it has such an amazing ability?! He answers that one must look closely at the words in the Gemara. It is standing in Bavel, in Babylon, and seeing what is not kosher in Israel. It's ‘not kosher’ to stand in Bavel and say what's negative and bad in Eretz Yisrael!

When we are in Chutz l'Aretz (outside of Israel) or WHEREVER we are, we have to see what is good in Jerusalem, what is good in Israel. We always have to have our fins on in terms of connecting to Eretz Yisrael, to feeling for Eretz Yisrael, and with God's help dreaming of the day when we will all be together in Eretz Yisrael.

Remember the message of the Raah. It doesn't take a kosher fish to stand outside and see what's negative inside. It takes power to always grow and connect to our inner love for Eretz Yisrael and hopefully have it overflow and bring all Jews back to Eretz Yisrael very soon.

Shabbat Shalom.